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INL FOR SCOTT HARRIS; TREASURY FOR OFAC/MARK SAMARA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: IT KCRM SNAR PTER

SUBJECT: ITALY WANTS COORDINATED ANNOUNCEMENT OF NDRANGHETA KINGPIN DESIGNATION

REF: A. STATE 32259

1B. HALL-HARRIS EMAIL 3/26/08

11. (U) Sensitive but Unclassified. Please protect accordingly. Not for internet distribution.

12. (U) This message contains an action request at para 3.

13. (SBU). SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST. The Italian MFA informed Charge d'Affaires on April 9 that the GOI welcomes the possibility of a Presidential designation of the 'Ndrangheta organized crime group as a narcotics kingpin, but strongly urges the U.S. to make the designation announcement "in full coordination with the Italian Government." The GOI would welcome a visit by a Treasury Department expert who could help coordinate the process before the June 1 designation date. The Italian Ambassador in Washington has been instructed by his government to contact INL PDAS Thomas Schweich on the matter. ACTION REQUEST: In the event that the interagency decides to move forward with the designation, post recommends that the Department work with NSC and Treasury to send an expert briefer to Italy and develop a strategy for a simultaneous or joint announcement of the designation. End Summary and action request.

14. (SBU) Poloff delivered reftel demarche on the possible designation of the 'Ndrangheta organized crime group as narcotics kingpin to Italian MFA Director for G8 Affairs, Counternarcotics and Organized Crime Diego Brasioli on March 131. On April 9, Brasioli contacted Charge to convey the GOI position that the designation would be a welcome step but that it should be done "in full coordination with the Italian Government." He said that the question had been examined "at the highest levels of the Italian government," i.e. in the Office of the Prime Minister. Given the "sensitive" nature of the question and the international publicity that the announcement would cause, the GOI believes that the announcement must convey the message that the U.S. and Italy are "in the fight together." A unilateral announcement by the White House would convey the wrong message; the GOI prefers a joint or, failing that, a simultaneous announcement coordinated in advance.

15. (SBU) Brasioli said that the GOI would continue to cooperate "in every possible way" with the U.S. in the fight against 'Ndrangheta activities and would welcome the visit of an expert from the Department of the Treasury to further explain the OFAC designation process and coordinate next

steps. He also said that the Italian Ambassador to the U.S. had been instructed to contact INL PDAS Tom Schweich on the matter. He said that the OFAC information sheets provided to the MFA make clear that other Western European companies and individuals have been designated, but this would be the first time that a Western European Tier One designation was announced. A unilateral designation may be acceptable in the case of South American Cartels, but not when the country in question is a G8 partner and NATO ally.

¶6. (SBU) As reported previously via ref email, Ambassador Spogli raised the possibility of the designation with the Italian Chief of National Police Antonio Manganelli on March ¶26. Manganelli welcomed the proposal, which he said would further strengthen the excellent cooperation between U.S. and Italian law enforcement. U.S. Embassy Legal Attache and DEA Regional Attache will meet with Manganelli's deputy on April 15 to discuss the matter further.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: The increase in 'Ndrangheta activities has been widely reported in the Italian and European press and the GOI is seized with the need to combat the growth of the organization. Mission Italy consensus in discussing the possible designation has been that USG objectives will be best served by full Italian Government cooperation and buy-in. The fact that the Prime Minister's Office has weighed in on the issue demonstrates both GOI commitment to strengthen cooperation with us on anti-organized crime efforts and the sensitivity of the issue for Italian public opinion. We recommend that the designation process go forward with full U.S.-GOI coordination on the announcement.

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